**Executive Summary**

**Review Context**

JET is a pan disability service, providing support to assist vulnerable groups to progress towards and/or into paid employment on Jersey. By 2017, the service directly employed 51 service staff across the 2 service areas making it a major player in the delivery of services to vulnerable people living on the island. JET is broadly divided into two main service areas: Training and Development (T&D) and the Employment Service. We found that staff worked across both service areas, meaning that any outcomes observed are not wholly attributable to a single service but to the JET service as a whole.

This Quality Assurance Review was undertaken to assess the quality of these two service areas. We employed a number of methods including: analysis of internal data records, direct observations of services, in depth interviews with JET staff, employers and service users. The outcomes observed for JET were compared to pre-established performance indicators including comparisons to national and local quality indicators and the internal targets and mission statements set for the JET service, to derive performance ratings for the various aspects of the 2 main service areas.

**JET Paid Employment Outcomes**

By December 2017 the JET’s Employment Service employed 18 staff on regular contracts, dedicated to supporting service users to successfully access paid work in the open employment market. The review found that JET’s Employment services are delivered in adherence to many aspects of the ‘best practice’ approaches associated with the ‘Place-Train-Maintain’ approach to Supported Employment. This is underpinned by activities involving employer engagement, vocational profiling, high amounts of one-on-one support in the workplace, and the use of ‘Training in Systematic Instruction’ techniques’.

The number of service users gaining and keeping paid jobs through JET is impressive and increased from 58 employees in 2007 to 270 in March 2018. This is significantly higher relative to comparable supported employment services in the UK. Notably, these numbers occurred despite the high proportion of jobs re-starting (56%) with people leaving their jobs and being supported to restart the same job, or to obtain a different job at a later time

The number of job restarts observed within JET is an anomaly, which the reviewers have not seen elsewhere in UK Supported Employment and is possibly the result of the large numbers of seasonal and temporary jobs that exist on the island. Within JET permanent contracts accounted for under half (46%) of the jobs starting within JET between 2012 and up to March 2018 and this compares with Jersey as a whole where 85% of contracts are permanent. This disparity could be attributable to a number of factors, including the availability of temporary work due to high staff turnover and the impact of the economic dip, resulting in fewer employers hiring permanent staff. However, the evidence shows that if JET could obtain more permanent jobs for the service user this could free up extra capacity within JET and increase the stability and financial independence of the service users.

Ironically, the number of jobs restarting within JET demonstrates the service has successfully set up efficient follow-up procedures to support large numbers of employees to regain employment once the job contracts expire. A significant number of employees are now also working independently (follow-up services aside), and the relatively low staff to service user ratios observed (1:12), compared to our service comparators (range=1:3 to 1:8), shows that the high numbers of people in paid work was not due to significantly higher staff numbers. This indicates an established supported employment agency, undertaking effective fading and follow-up strategies to free up finite resources to support increasing numbers of people in employment over time.

JET secured paid jobs in every job sector as defined by the States of Jersey providing service users with the full range employment options. However, the challenge remains for the service to increase the representation of service users in the ‘financial sector’, which stood at 5% in JET compared to 22% for Jersey as a whole as of March 2018. The observed increase in the diversity of the service users may help with this challenge, creating a broader range of job applicants from more diverse backgrounds with a wider array of skills and talents.

Results showed that the vast majority of paid jobs obtained by the service users were in typical open employment locations (92%), located in fully inclusive work environments. This resulted in high levels of social inclusion and integration into paid work and a ready-made pool of non–disabled co-workers as role models and natural supports for the service users. The service has also secured a relatively high proportion of full-time jobs with the result that they are more typical of the hours worked by non-disabled workers. JET has also avoided the over use of zero-hour contracts for their service users and recorded the equal highest average hours worked by employees (24 hours p.w.) compared to our four UK comparators. We found no trends in the numbers of full-time versus part-time jobs starting over the 10-year period where the proportions were consistently around the 50% full-time v part-time split.

Paid Employment: Service User Characteristics

The average age of those starting paid work through JET was 34 years and 8 months, which is representative of the Jersey working population. Although all working age groups are represented, JET has placed an emphasis on early intervention by supporting younger people through its Transitions project with the highest proportions of workers aged 17 to 26 (37%). However, as with many UK services, women are under-represented, accounting for only 37% of JET’s service users in paid employment. To redress this JET may be required to challenge dominant cultural assumptions about the suitability of employment for women with learning and other disabilities and may also require an examination of the profile of jobs found within JET to see if enough emphasis is being placed on finding jobs that are attractive to women.

The increase in the numbers of service users accessing paid employment via JET is accompanied by an increase in the diversity of service user groups. Findings show that even though the number of people with learning disabilities gaining work increased over the 10 year period, the overall proportional representation of this group fell from 57% of all people in work in 2007 to 27% by March 2018. Conversely, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of people with mental health conditions (from 3% to 20%) and those with long-term health conditions (from 3% to 11%) over the same period.

Paid Employment: Employer Outcomes

Findings show that JET has successfully engaged a large number of local employers over a sustained period of time. The key to this has been the establishment of mutual partnerships, evidenced by the large number of employers engaged by JET and the willingness of many employers to offer JET service users new vacancies as they arise. The employers we contacted hold the JET service in very high esteem: They highly valued the support that JET have provided to them and viewed the relationship as one of partnership for the mutual benefit of the employer, JET and the service users.

Employers identified many tangible benefits of working with JET, such as fulfilling recruitment needs and as a source of expertise for increasing their worksite accessibility. They also identified less tangible advantages accompanying changes in the way that disabled people are perceived by their work colleagues, having a greater understanding among employers of the needs of different groups and the advantages of having a more diverse workforce. Employers also identified the existential rewards of knowing that they are contributing to society and a sense of pride that goes with providing the opportunity and support to enable the person to succeed.

Results showed that for many employers JET is their ‘service of choice’ with an impressive 100% of employers interviewed stating that they would or intend to use the JET service again, and that they would recommend the service to other employers. Interestingly, many employers felt that with better marketing, JET could reach employers who are unaware of the service to expand their employer network even further.

Paid Employment: JET Service User Views

The findings from service user interviews demonstrate that JET has played a significant role in enabling the service users to obtain paid work with many stating they would still be unemployed without JET’s assistance. Service users also rated the quality of the support they received from JET as outstanding and highly valued by them. Many service users are using JET services successfully as a stepping-stone towards and into paid employment reinforcing earlier conclusions showing that the service is providing effective follow up procedures to ensure that many of those falling out of work are being supported to quickly regain employment. The service users we interviewed were obtaining jobs that suited their personal preferences and abilities and JET’s intervention has had a very positive impact on their lives in terms of their personal happiness, financial independence, and in some cases on their psychological and physical wellbeing, adding incalculable additionality.

Costs of JET’s Employment Service

Results indicated that during the year 2017, the per capita cost of JET was £2,335 per person per annum (p.p. p.a.), based on 256 individuals in paid work and operating costs for the employment service of £597,724. This is considerably lower than £5,395 per job outcome identified in the 2012 JET report and when compared to all 4 of our UK supported employment service comparators (range= £6,976 to £8,018 p.p. p.a.) and the average reported by the NDTi National Costs Survey, which showed an average per person cost for supported employment provision of £8,217 p.p. p.a. This demonstrates that the per capita costs of JET’s Employment Service have fallen over time as more and more people enter paid work through JET.

A financial costs: benefits analysis of JET’s Employment service showed that even with service users earning Minimum Wage levels that the net costs to the Jersey taxpayer is over £5,000 less p.p. p.a. than being unemployed and receiving Income Support only, even without factoring in savings due to reduced alternative day service usage. When we factored in wage rates based on the mean wages by employment sector, the net balance of savings to the taxpayer of the JET service were even more substantial at over £16,400 p.p. p.a. compared to a situation where the JET Employment Service does not exist.

These results reflect the comparatively high numbers of people that JET are supporting into paid employment, coupled with low staff to service user ratios. It also shows that this was the result of the SoJ progressive approach to Income Support, compared to the UK. The availability of marginal tax rates ensure that people are better off in paid work and this must play a role in the large numbers recruited into employment. Overall, these results clearly indicate that the service is providing very good value for money for the Jersey taxpayer.

**JET’s Training and Development Services Outcomes**

As of December 2017, JET’s T&D services employed 24 staff. Twelve were employed in the ‘pre-work training and development’ component spread across the Volunteering, Work Experience, Courses and Projects activity strands. The remaining 12 staff were employed across three income generating businesses comprising the Acorn Woodshack, Acorn Nursery and Acorn Re-use services. Although the T&D services aim to progress people towards and into paid employment it also caters for those individuals furthest from the labour market and for whom the undertaking of paid work may take longer.

There was a consistent yearly increase in activities delivered through T&D services across the 4 service strands from 127 recorded in 2012, to 692 in 2017, representing an impressive increase of over 400% over the five-year period. This was accompanied by a significant increase in the numbers of people accessing these services, from 95 in 2012 to 318 during 2017, affirming JET’s T&D services as a significant contributor for the delivery of day service activities for a large number of vulnerable people on the island.

This growth was accompanied by significant changes in the diversity of vulnerable groups accessing the services: in 2012 over half of those entering the 4 service strands had a learning disability (52%), but by 2017, the numbers of people with mental health conditions outweighed the number of individuals with learning disabilities (38% verses 23%) and there was also a significant representation of service users with physical disabilities (13%) and those with long term health conditions (12%) with 10% of service users having autism. The increase in numbers and diversity of groups over time was observed within all 4 service strands.

The average age of the service users accessing JET’s T&D services from 2012 to 2017 was 38 years of age (range = 17 to 67 years) with the service users engaged in Projects and Volunteering activities being generally older than their counterparts involved in Work Experience and Courses (42 and 41years compared to 36 and 35 years), almost certainly the result of the different needs of the groups accessing each activity strand. Unlike the service users in paid employment there was a more representative gender split with 52% of those attending T&D being women.

Volunteering activities started in 2013 with 13 individuals engaged. This increased to 50 volunteers in 2017, suggesting this is now an on-going option for JET’s service users. The vast majority of volunteering placements were located in community locations (93%) within a range of organisations that reflect typical volunteering activities (e.g., charities, community projects and other service provider organisations). The remaining 7% were located in the Acorn site. For some service users their volunteering was viewed as an end in itself, for others it was a means to gain confidence to progress into paid work.

Work Experience placements also increased from 8 service users in 2007, to 76 in 2017. Only a very small proportion of these activities were located in the JET buildings and offices (5%), with vast majority taking place in inclusive rather than sheltered work environments (5%). As with the Employment Service, Work Experience was taking place in the full range of employment options that exist on the island with the ‘financial sector’ being underrepresented, although this increased slightly from a 5% to an 8% representation over the paid employment outcomes.

One of the most notable outcomes within the T&D services has been the emergence of Project activities over the period, from 3 in 2012 to 457 in 2017, being a fulfilment of the JET strategy to expand Acorn to provide more opportunities to a wider range of service users. JET offers an impressive array of activities allowing for individualisation and choice for each service user whilst also teaching transferable skills and is, in our opinion, something that JET should be proud of.

There was a steady growth in the numbers of service users accessing Projects from 25 in 2013 to 136 in 2017, either as an option to alternative day services, or for relatively fewer people, as a means to progress into employment. Project sessions were generally short, being on average 3 hours in duration, with service users rotating from project to project often on a daily basis.

The vast majority of the Project activities took place within the Acorn site (92%), the highest proportion occurring in the Woodshack services (38%), followed by the Nursery project (21%) and the Re-use project accounting for 8%. Some Projects had clearly been set up specifically for those with high support needs, including a ‘soft furnishings’ project, accounting for 10% of sessions, the ‘allotment’ located behind the main Acorn buildings accounting for 8% of sessions, and various other small projects including the ‘small gifts’ and ‘pottery crafts’ projects also accounting for 8%.

The extent that the local community has become engaged with the Acorn Site is also impressive, realising the aim of establishing a ‘reverse inclusion’[[1]](#footnote-1) approach, especially with regard to the numbers of customers accessing the retail outlets of the Acorn businesses. However, the capacity for the projects to accommodate ever-greater numbers of service users will inevitably diminish over time. JET needs to guard against the temptation to continually increase the numbers of service users occupying the Acorn site beyond this capacity to the detriment of social inclusion of the service users.

The number of prevocational Courses undertaken also increased over the period, with 23 individuals engaged in 2012, rising to 56 service users in 2017. This included courses on ‘Health & Safety,’ ‘Information Technology’, ‘Customer Services’, ‘Confidence Building’ and CV and Job Interview Training. STEPs Induction and Transition training accounted for 11% of courses delivered. This demonstrates that along with other service strands, the numbers of courses and the number of JET service users engaged in them has grown over the period.

Movement from Service Strands into Paid Employment

The numbers of service users progressing into paid employment from the 4 service strands is impressive suggesting that 1 in 3 entering these services are progressing into open paid employment (33%). There was also significant movement observed between all the service strands, with some individuals falling out of work and back into the T&D services and others moving between all 4 service strands. Results showed that the highest proportion moving into paid work were from Work Experience (70% of service users), followed by Courses (42%) and Volunteering (28%) with just over 1 in 5 (22%) of service users accessing Projects progressing into paid work. It is unsurprising that the Projects had the smallest proportion of people entering work, due to the high support requirements of some of the individuals undertaking these activities. These results demonstrate that many individuals are using the different JET service strands as an effective and fluid pathway to successfully progress further toward the labour market and into open paid employment.

T&D Service User Views

The T&D service user interviews strongly suggest that without JET’s services many service users would be inactive during the day and isolated from meaningful community involvement. Many service users told us they were using T&D as a stepping-stone towards and into paid employment. It is also clear that those we interviewed rated the quality of the support they received from JET as outstanding and was highly valued by the service users with 100% stating that JET had had a positive impact on their lives. The findings show that the activities provided through JET are engaging the service users and providing them with stimulating daytime activities and having a very positive impact on their quality of life.

Some service users told us that the main reason they were with JET was because Social Security had “made” them attend in order to demonstrate they were actively seeking work and there was a sense that JET acted as a buffer between these individuals and Social Security with JET often being viewed as a “safe haven”. Service users highlighted the “understanding” and “patience” of the JET staff, and that the service enabled them to progress at their own pace, helping to relieve their stress and anxiety levels. Most of those attending the Job Club we interviewed reiterated that the service was a very useful helping hand back into employment, with approachable staff always willing to help.

**Acorn Businesses Financial Sustainability**

Following a financial analysis of the Acorn Business accounts, cash flows and financial predictions, it is our view the JET Acorn service is both financially viable and highly sustainable. It shows that the financial predictions and calculations for service growth and development are based on a realistic appraisal of the services current and future performance and that the financial predictions made by JET have ‘validity’ in that the predictions are based on JET’s previous and current financial outcomes and upon a ‘realistic’ appraisal of the services potential to generate surplus revenue.

Financial predictions are based on a significant increase in sales and revenue generated through the Re-use services from 2018 to 2020, following the completion of the new build retail outlet. It predicts an overall increase in revenue in 2018 over 2017 of £62,715, totaling £559,110. This is underpinned by a capital investment of £511,285 covering 2018 and 2019 to complete the new Re-use retail facility. This results in a maximum total net deficit of -£200,769 for the Acorn businesses for that year which is underpinned by a predicted reserve balance of +£623,261 as of December 2017, including a loan amount of up to £300,000 and suggests that current financial investments for the further development of the service (e.g., the new build for the Re-use service and the development of the house clearance business) are ‘affordable’ being underpinned by, and not exceeding the financial reserves held within the organisation. .

However, by 2020 capital investment is predicted to fall to £15,000, resulting in a significant increase in surplus revenue, sufficient to cover predicted loan repayments, and potential to significantly increase JET’s financial reserves in 2021 and beyond. This suggests that in the longer term JET will be able to not only maintain its predicted service outcomes for the service users without the necessity of external funding, but that there will be a cumulative increase in financial reserves held by JET beyond 2020. This produces the potential for further re-investment to make improvements to the quality of the service provision for its users and/or to expand the service and its capacity to support more service users over time. This provides a strong indication the service will able to sustain its current commitment to the service users and has potential to expand and develop the service based on comprehensive model coherency and detailed financial and business development planning.

**Service Purview: Staff Views**

To determine the ‘internal health’ of the service we conducted 38 in depth staff interviews with JET staff (73% sample). The results showed that staff-wide there was a clear and shared vision with regards to Jet’s mission and objectives. This was accompanied by a strong emphasis on person-centered approaches and individualisation backed up by a significant investment in staff development and training. It shows that JET has been a catalyst for developing expertise within the staff team and has been successful in creating a learning environment that encourages the staff to develop their skills and expertise and is open to outside agencies to bring new ideas and innovations.

Staff rated the quality of the supervision and appraisal they received from JET very highly, this occurred in a regular and often flexible manner, with staff valuing the expertise and guidance provided to them and in all but a very few cases, feeling that their views and opinions were being listened to and acted upon. Staff turnover rates within JET are low, suggesting that the organisation provides for a stable and contented workforce, this being reinforced by staff rating the quality of support they received from JET as excellent and outstanding. JET is clearly a good place to work for the vast majority, with staff feeling ‘proud of the service’ and rating this aspect higher than any other as ‘outstanding’- even though their rates of pay were generally less than in similar Jersey services.

Although most staff felt the resources provided to them by JET were ‘sufficient and very good’, the service may want to look at upgrading specific parts of the IT system and assessing the potential for improving the spatial arrangements within the Oakfield Offices and developing a plan to improve some parts of the Acorn building to better accommodate some planned activities. It is also clear that the comparatively low wage levels left some staff under financial duress, which for some was felt to be unsustainable.

Overall communication within the JET team was generally rated as ‘good’, with open door policies, supervisor accessibility and regular team meetings. Some staff reported that the communication between the employment and Acorn services had diminished, being a likely consequence of the speed at which both services had developed and grown. This was viewed as having a negative effect on information sharing, joint planning and collaboration, and service coherency and cohesion between the two services.

Maybe unsurprisingly, staff identified uncertainties around funding sources as the biggest threat to the JET service. These were felt to be often at the ‘whim’ of changes in the local political climate and/or local policy objectives and strategies. Many staff reiterated the obvious risks involved in developing the commercial arm of the Acorn service however, most of the staff we interviewed supported this risk taking, as it was viewed as an antidote to counter dependency on external funding for survival and the contractual restrictions these can bring.

The contractual constraints imposed by the ‘actively seeking work’ contract were a common theme throughout the staff interviews. The service needs to weigh up the advantages to the service users of JET acting as a supportive and trusted buffer between the person and Social Services on the one hand, against the negative effects these can have on JET’s relationship with the some service users and the threats posed to the individuality and wellbeing of the service users on the other.

Finally, staff had concerns that rapid expansion was resulting in ‘staff-burnout’ and was becoming a real and tangible threat within the service and there were calls for a period of consolidation, and staff wide consultation following the expansion of the Re-use service, to focus on the services that exist to allow greater ‘breathing space’ and reduce the threat of staff burnout.

**Summary of Performance Ratings**

Overall, although there are clearly some areas for improvement the weight of evidence (summarised in Section 6) demonstrates that JET performed ‘outstandingly’ against the established performance indicators across the main aspects of the JET service (see Table 1). In the review we make 32 evidence based recommendations for improving and progressing the service further.

**Table 1: Summary of JET Performance Ratings**

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| **Outcome** | **Rating** |
| JET Paid Work Outcomes  | *Outstanding* |
| Employment Service User Ratings | *Outstanding* |
| JET Employer Ratings | *Outstanding* |
| JET Training and Development Services | *Outstanding* |
| JET Training and Development Services User Outcomes | *Outstanding* |
| Acorn Businesses Financial Sustainability Rating  | *Outstanding* |
| JET Organisation Purview Rating | *Outstanding* |

1. *The strategy of developing a mainstream service or activity for non disabled people with the idea of including people with disabilities* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)